

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

Poet Megan Grumbling writes that today's poem "retells one of the many stories told to me by a beloved neighbor from my hometown in Wells, a certain sly old Maine woodsman I knew as Booker." In this story about a hunting trip, Booker offers advice to an unusual companion.

Some Kind of Hunter

by Megan Grumbling

He coaxed a pregnant woman right across
the river, and it weren't no easy bridge.
A cousin of an in-law, broke as dirt,
she come up visiting from Vermont too poor
to buy a license. Booker paid it, set
a rifle in her hands, and took her up
to Perkinstown, the brook side, where they come
upon this bridge, just beams and cables, rough.
Full six months big, a borrowed gun; to her,
that span, it looked like one hell of a stunt
when Booker brought her up to it, said, Look,
you've gotta cross that river on them wires.
Now, Booker's gone these routes, matters of course,
for quite a while, and spares no care or feat —
hauls moose out of the woods in split canoes,
checks hoofprints in the gravel pit's pale sand
most every morning, seeing where they cross.
A deer makes no more noise than shadow does,
he told his novice kin, and knows the sound
by going over into silence, deep, and back,
more than a couple times. So when he led
this woman, large with child, up to the bridge,
and she replied, Oh no – I can't do that,
he tried to make her see the other side.
You gotta, Booker said, or else what kind
of hunter are you? Well, that settled things.
Their bridge stretched lean but held, across the way.
She took hold of the cables, hand to steel,
and cradling that gun close, she went across.

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